

are concerned, but also of M. Dayet, who has more than once visited Versailles at my request. He also furnished me with a copy of the document from which I have quoted above and helped me with the translation of it. My thanks are also due to Mr Webster Evans, lately Editor of *John o' London's Weekly*, and his staff, for their kind assistance in the search for Miss Burrow's letter eventually found in the issue of 19 November 1932. (The date of the letter had been forgotten, and it was not indexed.) I take this opportunity to thank M. Robert Amadou for his kindness at an earlier stage in this inquiry in contributing a photocopy, made by the Archives Nationales, of part of Gabriel's plan of the French Garden, referred to in Part III of this Paper (37, 269). This and other photocopies of basic documents relating to this case will, in due course, be placed on the Society's file for future reference.

THE S.P.R. AND THE MYERS 'SEALED PACKET'

THE attention of the Council has been drawn to an attack on the Society by Mr Percy Wilson spread over the whole of the front page and a substantial part of another page of the issue of *Psychic News* for 11 September 1954. As it is possible that some readers of the S.P.R. *Journal* also see *Psychic News*, they may wish to know just how much substance there is in Mr Wilson's charges.

The main charge is that the S.P.R. has suppressed important evidence regarding the 'sealed packet' left by F. W. H. Myers to be opened after his death, and is based on a conversation Mr Wilson says he had with Sir Ernest Bennett who died over seven years ago. I do not repeat in full the account attributed to Bennett, as there is no need to give further publicity to a most inaccurate story: whether the inaccuracy was in Bennett's statement, or in Mr Wilson's memory of it, I cannot say. The facts, as told me by Oliver Lodge and other prominent members of the S.P.R., are as follows. In 1904 an automatic script written by a member of the 'S.P.R. Group' contained a statement that certain words would be found in the 'posthumous' packet. When the packet was opened later in that year nothing resembling these words was found. An account of the opening was printed in the S.P.R. *Journal* for January 1905 (12, 11-13), in which the experiment was described as having completely failed.

Later, several leading members of the Society, including Oliver Lodge, came to the conclusion on comparing several writings, classical and modern, some of the latter published and others then (and still) unpublished, that though in a literal sense there was no

connection between the script and the 'posthumous' message, it was possible to trace a connection between them, of the indirect, allusive type familiar to all students of automatic writing.

It was not at all a simple, clear-cut case that would convince every reader. Even if the connection were established, it would still be necessary to consider how far it went beyond the automatist's normal knowledge, or, as some would doubtless add, the possibilities of clairvoyance or of delayed telepathy from the living Myers. To make a complete exposition of the case it would have been necessary to use extensive quotations from unpublished papers, including one in particular of a private kind. Lodge and a few others had, in their personal capacity, access to these papers, but no right to quote from them. The papers in question have never been in the Society's possession, and the Council has never been involved. It is not true, as suggested by Mr Wilson, that the Council decided 'on the advice of Lord Balfour [Gerald, not Arthur] to continue the silence'. I remember quite well the incident of which this is an inaccurate account.

While Lodge was alive, the decision as to publishing a statement about the 'posthumous' packet rested with him and not with the Council, as he was the senior of those who had access to the papers. He discussed the position with me a few years before his death. He wished to publish a statement, but realized that in so complex a matter only a *full* statement would carry weight, and that, in the absence of permission to quote extensively from a particular document, no full statement was then possible. Nor is it now. Mr Wilson might perhaps consider whether his method of ventilating the subject is the one best calculated to persuade persons, who have hitherto withheld permission to quote from private papers, to grant that permission now.

If Mr Wilson wanted information on this matter, all he had to do was to write to the Secretary in the usual way, when I should have been glad to save him and his readers from the inaccuracies, both as to Myers's 'posthumous' message, and other things too, to which he has given so great publicity.

These inaccuracies are spread thickly over all his article. Conan Doyle is said to have resigned from the S.P.R. Council, of which he was never a member. Mr Findlay is said to have resigned from the Society 'because of the Council's behaviour to Sloan'. The Sloan incident, which incidentally never came before the Council, occurred in 1923, and Mr Findlay resigned eight or nine years later. As I pointed out in my review (*Journal*, 36, 729) of Mr Findlay's *Where Two Worlds Meet*, a suggestion that the S.P.R. should investigate Sloan had attached to it a condition that Sloan

should be appointed caretaker at Tavistock Square: for corroboration of this see Mr Findlay's remarks at the Annual General Meeting for 1931 as reported in the *Journal*. If Mr Wilson wished to bring Sloan into his tirade, he should in candour have referred to the facts set out in my review of Mr Findlay's book. The S.P.R. *Journal* is accessible to the staff of *Psychic News*.

But what is one to think of the evidential standards of people who regard it as a reasonable suggestion that a professional medium should have the run of S.P.R. premises at all hours of day and night, with uncontrolled access to cupboards containing confidential papers? Locked up, of course, but duplicate keys are not unknown.

Mr Wilson speaks of Mr Fred Barlow as having taken 'a leading part in the alleged exposure of William Hope'. Hope was exposed by Harry Price in 1922. In the controversy that followed, Mr Barlow took an active part—as a supporter of spirit photography. Later, as the result of further study of spirit photography, he changed his views and collaborated with Rampling Rose in the devastating investigation reported in Vol. 41 of our *Proceedings* (1932-3).

Mr Wilson suggests, on the strength of his memory of a talk with G. N. M. Tyrrell some years ago, that the Council when appointing him Myers Memorial Lecturer in 1942 had 'placed limitations in advance' on his investigating 'objective' apparitions. No limitation of this kind was ever imposed by the Council or even considered by them, as the contemporary written evidence proves. 'Objective' is in this connection an ambiguous word.

Tyrrell discusses fully the reasons for regarding apparitions in general as non-physical, and states his own views on collective percipience, often regarded as the main argument for objectivity in the physical sense: see pages 53-60, 69-73, 109-15 of the new edition.

It would be a waste of valuable *Journal* space to discuss Mr Wilson's diatribes, as vague as they are heated, against 'the succession of small cliques' 'prejudiced against Spiritualists' supposed to have dominated the S.P.R. 'for many years'. All through the Society's history the Council has included persons who believed in survival and communication, others who did not believe this, others again who suspended their judgment, or were not specially interested in that side of psychical research. All have worked harmoniously together because they aimed to approach their problems in a 'spirit of exact and unimpassioned enquiry' as laid down in our founders' manifesto (*Proc.*, I, 4).

W. H. SALTER